

Verbal relationship building skills

Strategy (PEARLS)	Description	Examples
Partnership	Joint problem-solving	"Let's tackle this together."
Empathy	Show understanding; put feelings into words	"That sounds hard." "You look upset." "You seem discouraged." "Wow!"
Apology (compassion)	Show concern for "faux pas," hurts, bumbles	"I'm sorry I (or others) hurt/offended/annoyed you."
Respect	Value patient's choices, traits and behaviors	"I appreciate your courage/decision/action." "You have worked hard on this."
Legitimization	Normalize and validate feeling and choices	"Anyone would be confused/sad/irritated by this situation."
Support	Offer ongoing personal support	"I'll stick with you as long as necessary."

Resist the powerful temptation to pursue clinical details when responding to a patient's emotion. Avoid actions that tend to make people feel ignored or irritated, such as judging, being defensive, persistent questioning, giving nonverbal cues of irritation, or prematurely giving information, advice, or reassurance.

Adapted by permission from Clark W, Hewson M, Fry M, et al. American Academy on Physician and Patient (AAPP 1998), now the American Academy on Communication in Healthcare.

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